

VZCZCXYZ0001  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHNT #0739/01 1771154  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 251154Z JUN 08  
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9882  
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 4082  
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0295  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4697  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0561  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0441  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0579  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4287  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2579  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0600  
RUEHKS/AMEMBASSY MINSK 0417  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7465  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1236  
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR 0161  
RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN 0291  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC 0145  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2549  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0305  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1876  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1274  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000739

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/25/2018  
TAGS: [AORC](#) [ASEC](#) [ECIN](#) [KTIA](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [UZ](#)  
SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON PROPOSED  
CSTO-EURASEC MERGER

Classified By: Poloff Steven Prohaska for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

11. (C) Summary: In a June 24 meeting with Poloff, Bahromjon Alov from Uzbekistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticized the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Community (Eurasec) for slow activity and duplication of effort. He noted Uzbekistan's especially deep skepticism toward Eurasec and raised concerns about possible conflicts for member states between World Trade Organization and Eurasec Customs Union requirements. Alov echoed President Karimov's June 6 proposal to merge the CSTO and Eurasec, citing the potential time and resources savings. Another possible driver behind the proposal is Karimov's desire for recognition as a regional leader--acceptance of the proposal could highlight Uzbekistan's influence in the region, while rejection of it could insulate Uzbekistan from possible criticism from member states dissatisfied with one or both organizations. Alov also denied claims in the Russian press that the merger is intended to create a counterweight to NATO, though the proposal might reflect in part a desire to balance relations among key states active in the region and to show the West that Karimov has other options. End summary.

Uzbekistan Critical of Slow Activity, Duplication of Effort  
-----

12. (C) During a June 24 meeting with Poloff, Bahromjon Alov--the Director of Uzbekistan's Department for Cooperation with CIS Countries and Russia in Uzbekistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)--criticized the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and particularly the Eurasian Economic Community (Eurasec) for their "very slow tempo of activity." (Note: At the informal summit of the CIS

countries in St. Petersburg on June 6, President Karimov proposed combining the CSTO and Eurasec into a single organization. With the exception of Armenia, which belongs only to the CSTO, both organizations have the same members. End note.) Aloeov explained that primary goals of Eurasec include the creation of a Customs Union and a free trade zone, but neither of these goals has been realized yet, and instead the organization has been organizing events that are "ineffective." He repeatedly noted Uzbekistan's pessimistic attitude toward Eurasec.

13. (C) Aloeov said that Uzbekistan sees a duplication of effort between the CSTO and Eurasec. "Sometimes they work on the same documents, on illegal migration, border issues, and so on," he said. Aloeov then quoted President Karimov, asserting that not a single economic project can be realized without providing security. He said that Karimov's proposal would create a strong regional organization that can solve both economic and security issues and will avoid duplication of effort. "At present, all member states pay fees to Eurasec and the CSTO," Aloeov stated. Combining the organizations would reduce the fees that each member state would have to pay. Aloeov noted that none of the other CSTO or Eurasec member states has responded to Karimov's merger proposal, but many international experts have reacted to it positively.

#### A Choice Between Eurasec and the WTO

-----

14. (C) "Eurasec is divided into two groups," Aloeov continued. The first "troika" consists of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. They are working on forming the legal basis for a Customs Union charter, and according to the current schedule, this will be complete by 2010. At the same time, these states are trying to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), Aloeov said. He asserted that these states should choose to join Eurasec's Customs union or the WTO, because obligations under one may conflict with those of the other. The second group consists of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and each state will join the Customs Union later on when they are "willing" and "prepared." Kyrgyzstan is in the WTO, he said. "Will Kyrgyzstan listen to the WTO's demands or those of Eurasec's Customs Union?" Aloeov asked. "There are many questions."

#### Why Can't They be More like the SCO?

-----

15. (C) "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) works well," Aloeov said, and praised the SCO for its more specific activities. "When there is a Heads of State meeting of the SCO, there is a maximum of two or three issues on the agenda... and these are strategic issues," he continued. In an exasperated tone, he complained that the Eurasec agenda often has 20-30 items, and Uzbekistan has tried to block certain items from being placed on the agenda. Aloeov also asserted that other members have not been participating very actively in Eurasec. Regional cooperation is important, and any cooperation based on mutual respect is good, he said.

#### We Don't Have Plans to Counter NATO

-----

16. (C) Poloff asked about recent Russian press reports indicating that Uzbekistan intends to use this organization to counterbalance NATO and the European Union. (Note: A June 11 article in Nezavisimaya Gazeta quoted Karimov as saying that the union would be capable of becoming a counterweight to NATO and the European Union. End note.) Aloeov said that Uzbekistan has no plans to counter NATO, and that each organization is acting in accordance with its own interests. He noted that organizations such as the SCO and NATO have overlapping interests, but each has its own zone of responsibility. Aloeov said that Uzbekistan supports further contact between organizations, and that each should support the basic principle of non-interference in states' internal affairs.

Comment:

-----

17. (C) Alov was surprisingly frank in his assessment of Eurasec--he was also far more critical of this organization than he was of the CSTO--and the Government of Uzbekistan's proposal to merge the the organization with the CSTO may stem from one or a combination of several motives. First, merging the two would save Uzbekistan time and money by reducing the number of meetings with other members of the CIS and the fees that the country must pay. Indeed, GOU officials have complained on several previous occasions about "duplication of effort" among various organizations during recent international conferences on Afghanistan and the Aral Sea. Moreover, Tashkent may wish to integrate the two because it

views economic growth and security as interrelated. Second, President Karimov may view the proposal as a win-win scenario. If the other member states eventually sign up to Karimov's proposal, the acceptance would be a recognition of Uzbekistan's regional influence, and the prestige of being considered a regional leader is something that Karimov probably craves. If Karimov's proposal is rejected, he will be able to counter any possible complaints from dissatisfied member states by claiming that he proposed something that would have addressed some of their concerns. Nevertheless, even if Karimov's proposal to integrate the organizations materializes, it is unclear whether this would address all of Uzbekistan's concerns, such as the excessive number of Eurasec agenda items and the possible conflicts between WTO and Eurasec requirements. Third, there is the possibility that the proposed merger is intended to counterbalance NATO, as touted in the Russian press. While Uzbekistan's media has not touched the issue, it is possible that the move reflects a desire to balance Uzbekistan's relations with key countries active in the region and to send a subtle signal to the West that he has other options if he perceives that it is putting pressure on Uzbekistan.

NORLAND